

Childhood

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ciency with the overhand stroke and girls with the breast stroke.^a Sometimes the children amused themselves by rolling down the bank so that their bodies made a loud smack as they hit the water. At other times they held contests to see who could dive and stay under the longest time, or who could make the biggest bubble by exhaling under water. Follow-the-leader was played even in big rivers like the Missouri, but only the more courageous participated in this game. The one who had the reputation as bravest was the leader, and Coming Daylight claimed that she, herself, often led off, one of her accomplishments being the ability to swim quite far under water.

There was no adult supervision of children at play and they spent much time at the water's edge, even when not intending to swim. Modelling in clay was done by boys as well as by girls. The latter liked especially to form wet clay into "parflesches" and incise marks to represent beaded and painted designs.

Walking on stilts, teetering on logs, swinging by standing in a loop of rawhide, all were considered enjoyable activities for little girls. Nevertheless some of their games were quite rough and tumble. In one such game, girls formed a circle, each pinching the flesh on the back of her neighbor's left hand; while standing thus they sang a song which was repeated as many times as necessary until someone let go of her neighbor's hand; whereupon this girl was jumped on and mauled by all the others. In another game, one girl, with her eyes closed, would try to find the others who were seated in a row on the ground. Different ones would call out: "This way! This way!" Each was anxious to be the first discovered. As soon as the girl who was "it" touched one of the others, she picked her up and, carrying her upside-down on her back to the spot from which she had originally started, she dumped her burden on the ground. This procedure was repeated until "it" had carried each girl, but the last one to be dumped was tickled unmercifully by all the others.

Girls played with two kinds of balls. One type was of buckskin stuffed with deer-hair. This they would toss to one another. The other type of ball was large and made from the bladder of a

^a buffalo cow, dried and stuffed.
The marked ability of the Gros Ventres in swimming was noted in 1833 by Maximilian, p. 72.

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